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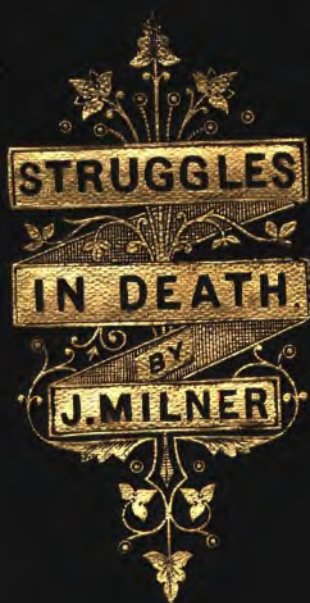
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STRUGGLES IN DEATH;

OR,

SCENES I HAVE WITNESSED, AND LESSONS I HAVE
LEARNED WHEN VISITING THE SICK
AND THE DYING.

BY THE

REV. JOHN MILNER.

"If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet
more regard to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."
Dr. Johnson.



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STRUGGLES IN DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"Charity, indeed, we owe to the dead as well as to the living, but not that erroneous charity by which truth is violated, and undeserved commendation lavished on those whom truth could no longer injure."—*H. More.*

NO class of men, members of the medical profession excepted, witness more struggles in death than ministers of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such are, if like their Lord and Master, often found standing by the bed where struggling life is laid, seeking to minister comfort and instruction to the departing soul, by pointing her to the Lamb of God, and thus fit her for her passage.

Mournful, indeed, are some of the sights, which on these occasions they witness, and, plaintive to

an extreme are the strains, of what has been termed—

“The sad, still music of humanity,”

to which they are compelled to listen.

We dare say, that the portfolios of very many of our brethren in the ministry, contain curious and solemn records of such scenes ; as numbers of them, like ourselves, will have been eye-witnesses to singular combats with death, which, in Scripture phraseology is styled the “King of terrors,” and also “the last enemy.”

Such records, if permitted to speak, would tell many a dismal tale. They would tell tales of sorrow felt, battles fought, reverses suffered, and victories won.

Then why not give them a voice to the public ear? as a friend remarked to us on perusing our manuscript, “Records of the scenes we had witnessed,” on those solemn occasions. Why not? we said to ourselves, and, this, we at once resolved to do, believing them to be adapted for usefulness, inasmuch as they practically elucidated portions of God’s Word. This is our apology, if any be needed, for allowing them thus to appear. They might, with truth and propriety, have been termed “Scraps from our Portfolio,” for such they are in reality. The nucleus of the bunch was formed in 1854, and

from that time to the close of 1868, they have been accumulating. But though fourteen years elapsed from the transpiration of the first scene to the time when the last was witnessed, they have in all cases been recorded while fresh on the mind, a circumstance favourable to accuracy. This is felt to be an advantage, inasmuch, as in the preparation of them for the press, it obviated the necessity of taxing the memory, racking the inventive faculty or drawing largely on the imagination, in order to produce a tale. There were no faded colours to retouch, nor dying impressions to revive. Distance has in no instance lent enchantment to the scene. We had a tale to tell, and without seeking to extenuate anything, or aught put down in malice, have, according to our measure, faithfully chronicled what we saw, felt, and heard. As we now with undisturbed emotion look back upon the scenes, we can recall nothing that wears an exaggerated hue. We have, in some instances, acted the part of the painter, who casts into the shade what in his picture would offend the eye. A few coarse expressions and hard things which were listened to on one or two occasions have been "cloaked."

Our stock of scenes is not exhausted, but we have selected from the series those of them we thought most likely to be useful. Neither have we in the arrangement paid strict regard to chronology, as

far as the order in which they occurred is concerned. There are in this respect known anachronisms. This, however, is of small moment. But the most scrupulous regard for the truth has been maintained ; while in some instances, we have, for the tenderest of all reasons, carefully concealed names, we have, in other cases, where the nearest and dearest relatives of those departed ones have also gone into eternity, given the proper initials of their names.

We have not been eager to produce a sensation in the minds of our readers, by unfolding a tale calculated to harrow up the soul. Far-fetched materials we have not dealt in.


To stoop to court a grin, when we ought rather to bend to woo a soul, is what we have yet to learn. We believe fact to be more strong than fiction, and that scenes, though far surpassing fable, may be yet true. In the composition of the scenes, the gold leaf, or hammering-out principle, has not been acted on. On this principle, a little of the precious metal is made to go a long way. A small quantity of matter may be diffused over a wide surface, until the truth becomes so diluted, that it resembles a certain Commentary on the Gospels, of which an old woman said, that while the text was like a glass of wine, the comment was like a glass of wine in a quart of water. Instead, however, of lengthening

out, we have had to curtail and abridge, yea, to suppress several scenes entirely, for fear of swelling the volume into too bulky a form, which from necessity would have augmented the price, and thus have placed it almost beyond the reach of many of the poorest of our people. This we were anxious to avoid, inasmuch as it was chiefly with the view of benefiting them that the work was begun; and they can ill afford to purchase expensive books. The scenes have all been witnessed in the lowliest walks of life, that is, among those who are poor in purse. It is amongst these that our lot has chiefly fallen to labour, but in this we glory, and would not exchange places with the loftiest of mitred heads, or proudest of earth's monarchs. In what are sometimes called the lowest strata of society we have met with some of the noblest specimens of humanity, and the highest exemplifications of Christianity. And as the scenes have all transpired amid the poorer sort of folks, to such, as a rule, the reading will, we believe, be confined. We cannot flatter ourselves for a moment, that they will possess any charms for the learned, or the great, inasmuch as they lack the polish and the finish necessary to render them congenial to minds like those. They contain no nicely rounded periods, nor sentences smooth as polished brass, nor arguments tough as wire. They are rough hewn sketches, plain facts,

having nothing but their importance and truthfulness to commend them. They contain experimental verifications of God's truth, as revealed to the world in Jesus Christ.

It was originally intended to issue the work anonymously. As we could not lend to it the prestige of a great name, we resolved to send it abroad "fatherless." But, as a living author remarks, "Let every mischievous animal have its master's name engraven on its collar, and strapped round its neck; every child be properly filiated, that it may not be sent to the parish for the public to keep, or be laid, like a foundling, at the door of another than its own parent; every dealer in wares have his sign board over his door, to inform the public of the kind of goods he offers for inspection and sale—in short, let every man have the credit of his own opinions, utterances, and acts."

Believing this to be right, we throw away the idea of publishing anonymously. If the readers of the scenes are thrilled, awed, and blessed in reading as was the author in witnessing, they will not have been given to the world in vain, the mercy of God will be extolled, His name honoured, souls blessed, while the writer will secure all the reward for his labour that he craves. In the confident expectation that the perusal of the "Scenes" will be made a blessing to some, we commit them to the wide



world, praying that the blessing of Him who can make the feeblest instrument mighty in the Redeemer's interests, may attend them, and make them the means of arousing careless sinners, awakening backsliders, encouraging anxious inquirers, and leading wanderers from the mazy labyrinths of error into the good old paths of truth and salvation ; to accomplish this the Saviour died, for this purpose the ministry was instituted, and to this end all the aims of the Church, in her collective and individual capacity, should be directed.



CHAPTER II.

WITHOUT HOPE.

"The death of wise men is to be lamented, but the life of fools much more; but the death of sinners, and their irrevocable ingress into eternity that has no return, is most of all to be lamented."—*Anonymous*.



DEATH-BED, it has been said, is a detector of the heart; there tired dissimulation drops her mask, and is seen no more. It has also been said, by the same authority, that—

"Fools, men may live,
But fools they cannot die."

Speaking generally, this is true; it has, however, its exceptions. History furnishes us with examples of men who, when dying, have indulged in such vagaries, and played such fantastic tricks before the face of high heaven, as to compel us, at least, to query the sincerity of their hearts or their sanity of minds. The case of David Hume is, we think, an example to the point.

This leading spirit of deism, upon whose head the disciples of that school heap so many flattering

eulogies and fulsome panegyrics, is said to have squandered the last few moments of his existence on earth, in drolling about the fabled Charon and his boat, ferrying souls across the rivers Styx and Acheron.

To see an Erotostratus setting fire to the temple of Diana in order to eternize his name, or a Néro amusing himself with his fiddle while Rome was in flames, were truly a burlesque when compared with the manner in which this philosopher spent his life's last hour.

Few men have the hardihood to play the hypocrite in death ; Hume, we believe, did. If not, he died a fool, the victim of self-imposed and long-cherished delusions. The influence of such delusions over the minds of men is terrible, indeed, it beggars description and defies exaggeration. When men have spent a life-time in sin, and are at last, left to grovel amid the fumes of their own foolish passions, and chase the phantoms of their vain imaginations ; it is impossible to predict how low they will stoop, or to what lengths they will go, to perpetuate their opinions, bolster up their hopes, or make their disciples stand firm. Men may also in their final moments be deserted by the God that made them, and have to say with the wicked and jealous King Saul, "God is departed from me." 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

This truth is strikingly illustrated in the following example :—

We were early sent for one morning to visit an old man, for the purpose of praying for him, as the messenger expressed it. The snows of more than seventy winters had blown over his head, an unending eternity now stared him in the face. After making a few kind inquiries about his bodily afflictions and temporal wants, we proceeded to direct his thoughts to the condition and prospects of his soul for the world to come, which he was apparently soon to enter. No sooner had we begun so to do than we were interrupted by him, with—

“Stop, sir, stop, sir, stop, let me talk first.”

We did so, when he went on to say, in a most painful tone—

“I have it as clear as day. Memory carries me back to it, O that I could forget it. Fifty years ago, the Spirit of God strove powerfully with me. I thought I should be compelled to be religious. I felt then, as if I could not live, and dared not die, without religion. But I trifled with conviction, and tampered with sin. In this way I lived for some years. Sometimes I was miserable, at other times, there was a sort of calm in my soul.

“But ever and anon my convictions were revived by the Lord, who followed me with His Spirit. I kept forming resolutions, but failed to put them in-

to practice, and in this way I deadened my convictions.

“I got at last to fancy that I should always possess good desires, and that I could turn to the Lord at any time, but sin and the devil have deceived me. Yes, I have been cheated out of my all. I would give a world, if I had it, to see and feel as I once felt and saw about my soul ; but it can never again be. No, no never. God will not be mocked, and this I have done.

“I have mocked my Maker, and He now laughs at my calamity.”

He here seemed almost exhausted with the protracted effort to relate his sad experience, and sank back on his pillow.

We endeavoured to encourage his hopes by reading to him several portions of God's Word, offering at the same time a few explanatory remarks. This, however, only seemed to add poignancy to his grief ; hence he replied,—

“Ah, yes, I daresay it seems easy enough to you, you see and feel it. I once saw it and felt it too. I now see it, but cannot feel it. I have, what I once heard a preacher call it, the light of the moon, pale, cold, and clear ; it is not the light of the sun, that melts and warms.

“I have no feeling, I cannot get any. O, how hard my heart is.”

Seeing that he was microscopically analyzing his feelings, and allowing the whole of his attention to be absorbed in the workings of his mind, we endeavoured to show him that it was a very common thing for persons when labouring under an aching sense of guilt, to be so taken up with their feelings as to utterly lose sight of Jesus, who is the Sun of Righteousness, the light of the world, and who can and will diffuse light and heat through the souls of those who look to him with an eye of faith.

After offering prayer to God on his behalf, we left him, promising to call again on the morrow.

The next day found us again by his bed, there was the same gloominess hanging about him as when previously we saw him.

We related to him the following anecdote of a poor man, who, while in a state of deep distress about his soul, was tempted to conclude that his day of grace was for ever past, and himself lost ; that therefore, his best course would be to put an end to his life, which, if continued, would but serve to increase his sin, consequently his misery, from which there was no escape ; and seeing he must be in hell, the sooner he was, the sooner he would know the worst, which was preferable to being worn with the tormenting expectation of what was to come. Under the influence of such suggestions as these, he went to a river, with the design of drowning him-

self; but, as he was about to do so, he seemed to hear a voice saying to him, "Who can tell? Who can tell?" By this, therefore, he was brought to a stand, his thoughts were arrested, and thus began to work on the passage mentioned—"Who can tell?" Jonah iii. 9. "Who can tell," said he, "what God can do, when he will proclaim His grace glorious? Who can tell, but such an one as I may find mercy, or what will be the issue of humble prayer to heaven for it? Who can tell what purposes God will serve in my recovery?" By such thoughts as these, being so far influenced as to resolve to try, it pleased God graciously to enable him, through all his doubts and fears to throw himself by faith on Jesus Christ, as able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, humbly desiring and expecting mercy for His sake, to his own soul. In this he was not disappointed, but afterwards became an eminent Christian and minister; and from his own experience of the riches of God's grace, was greatly useful in leading desponding souls to the cross for pardon. Great and illustrious as was this example of mercy, it did not seem to bring one ray of comfort to the mind of this drooping sinner. His hopes were swallowed up by despair.

Poor S. S. ! Once more did we visit him, and found the darkness becoming more dense. This was the day previous to his death.

On this occasion he quoted Genesis vi. 3, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," and said "That text lies like a mighty load upon my heart ; it is crushing me to death ; I am burdened with it day and night."

"It is all over, over for ever," were the last words we heard him utter.

We were told by a relative of his that a settled gloom and stupor set in upon him during the closing scene. The night was dark, the valley was gloomy, the silence of sorrow pervaded the habitation of the sufferer, as the slumber of death stole over his eyelids, and his mortal body lies in the churchyard of ———, awaiting the summoning sound of the archangel's trumpet. A plain stone marks the spot where he lies, reared by the hand of his only son, who has since then died.

REMARKS.

Have we not in the death of S. S. a verification of the Scriptures, where it is written of the ungodly, that his own iniquities shall take him and he shall be bound with the cords of his sin. He shall die without instruction, in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

God is long-suffering, but not for ever : in every instance, while life shall last, will He bear with sin-

ners? No, no; emphatically, no. If it were so, the Bible would not be true.

Sinners may be so befooled by the devil, besotted and stupified by sin, intoxicated and bewildered by the noxious effluvia of rank error, and licentious pursuits, until they are past feeling, and are left to perish in their corruption and guilt. The Spirit of the Lord may be grieved away to return no more, for ever. He is joined to his idols, let him alone; minister, let him alone; judgments, let him alone; Holy Spirit, let him alone; conscience, let him alone. Let him sleep the sleep of spiritual death, and only awake to a proper sense of his condition, when the flames of hell have become his winding-sheet, and devils his companions for ever. Men may die without any bonds in their death; their strength may be firm, they may die as they live, free from all perplexities about the future, and yet be unprepared. Such are past feeling, they have dead hearts in their bosoms.

There is no state on this side hell so much to be deprecated as is this.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Quench not the Spirit, lest He leave thee for ever.



CHAPTER III.

ON A FALSE FOUNDATION.

"This, then, do, if you will lay a right foundation : go straight to Christ with all your ungodliness."—*Wesley*.



SPECIOUS superstructure may be reared on a rotten foundation. Shelter may be sought in miserable and inadequate places of refuge, but when the rains descend, the floods come, then, to take up the figure of the prophet, the covering is found too narrow to afford protection, and the foundation too loose to resist the force of the flood. The fabric falls with a crash, and great is the fall of it. Its ruin is instantaneous and complete. To drop metaphor, men may live without religion, and be tolerably comfortable too, so long as health, strength, and prosperity combine to make them so.

And such may also, even in the shades of adversity, sometimes evince no small amount of fortitude, as it is often falsely so called, from the fact that they have no proper knowledge of their real state and position. In such cases stark insensibility is mistaken for firmness.

Such men may also—and often are such examples to be met with—be brought face to face with death, and know no fear, while at the same time they are without hope ; but are feasting their souls on flattering and unctuous delusions, crying peace, peace, when there is no peace ; and in this manner go quietly down to the grave in an unpardoned condition.

Their house is on the sand, and the wide breaking-in of the waters of the Jordan of death, sweeps it away, and leaves not a vestige behind.

In the middle of the forenoon of a sweet April day, in the year 18—, we were hurriedly sent for to visit a female, for whom, as the messenger stated, the doctor said there was no chance, that is of getting better.

Breaking in, as the request did, upon our other labours, it was felt for the moment to be somewhat annoying ; but, remembering that one important end of life is to do good to the souls of our fellow-creatures, we at once accompanied the messenger to the bed of affliction.

Everything about the house, where the sick one lay, bespoke a rude kind of comfort, that is, plenty, without much refinement or domestic culture. There was an air of homeliness and blunt affability in the manners of the inmates, such as makes you

feel immediately at home, and that you are in pretty safe hands. Eyes, methinks, never rested on a family whose faces wore a more frank and genial expression than did theirs.

The sick woman was apparently some sixty years of age. The disease beneath which she laboured, had, as we were told, been hanging about her for years, but had suddenly, from over-exertion, been aggravated, and had assumed a fatal phase.

She had expressed a wish that we should be sent for, to pray with her. We had been engaged in conversation with her about the state of her soul and its prospects for eternity but a few minutes, before she gave us distinctly to understand that she was using her own words, "fit to die."

At this we expressed satisfaction ; but, suspecting the basis of her hopes was not what it ought to be, we at once sought to ascertain on what foundation this readiness for death was founded. We soon discovered that it was built upon what she was in herself, upon what she had done for herself and other people.

It was a righteousness of her own creation. She was building on a wrong foundation. This, her own statements amply confirmed. We give them in the exact words she used :—

"I never in my life," said she, "turned a beggar from the door without giving him something to eat,

if I had a bite ith' house ; and nobody can come and say that iver I did them any harm. I have nought on my conscience ; I have nothing to fear ; I'm ready to die."

Her aged partner stood by the bed, and being eager to give confirmation to all that she had advanced, replied,—

"Aye, bless her, shoo's been a good creature all her life ; shoo could read her Bible as weel as ivert parson could."

There was not a word about Jesus and the merit of His blood, not a word about the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, not a word about repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, not a word about her inwardly-depraved and divinely-condemned condition through sin, nor anything about a violated law and its penalty.

She was righteous, but not before God. She was self-righteous. Justification by works was what she was seeking.

We endeavoured to show J. F. that, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and to do good to those who were in a needy condition, were duties that all ought to perform, duties that we each owed one to another by reason of our common relationship, being the offspring of one common parent ; but, that such works were in no wise meritorious before God, so as to constitute a ground on which we might safely build for acceptance with Him at the last.

We read to her the third chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, offering thereon a few explanatory remarks, by way of cutting from beneath her feet the false ground on which she stood. This we saw to be needful, while the task was felt to be delicate and difficult. In smashing the idol, you do not of necessity destroy the idolatry. It is possible for the fragments of the shivered idol to be rudely joined, and like a cracked, oriental vessel become more precious than a new one.

So, in removing a bad foundation, you do not of necessity put the superstructure on a better. It is possible to destroy vain hopes, and, in so doing, induce despair. The latter alternative we were anxious to avoid.

As we continued to visit J. F. for several days, we strove to lead her to Jesus, who is the sure foundation.

Her case never assumed a very hopeful aspect. She seemed to cling tenaciously to her "good life," which meant a few humane actions, which might be the natural fruits of a kind and feeling nature. The highest point of natural goodness approximates closely to the lowest forms of Christian virtue. Again, the so-called good works of J. F. might be services offered to God as a sort of commutation, cheap for the sacrifice of a devoted heart.

A few more days of gradual decay, and J. F. passed away, without leaving behind her any appre-

ciable signs of having received the Lord Jesus as her prophet, priest, and king, who did for her and all mankind salvation bring, by surrendering His life into the hands of Divine justice, as a sacrifice for human sin ; not figuratively speaking, but literally and truly, a sacrifice for sin.

W. F. was a mechanic living in the town of ——. An accident befell him in the year 186—, which confined him to his bed, and, after a few weeks of suffering, resulted in his death.

It was under these circumstances that we were first made acquainted with his history, though the family was not entirely strange to us, having occasionally seen part of them at our chapel.

We had also some slight acquaintance with the father and mother of William, who were members of a dissenting Church in the same town, but who have both since died. The following particulars respecting them, we gathered from their relatives whilst visiting W.

Mr. and Mrs. F. were poor, very poor, but were regarded as being most decidedly pious. Hence, their children enjoyed all the advantages of a religious, secular, and social character their status in society would allow.

It was said to be the daily practice of Mrs. F. to pray with her children in secret. Many times has

she been seen kneeling in the midst of them by her own fireside, laying her hands first on the head of one, and then another, and mentioning them separately by name, asking God to bless them, and make them good boys and girls.

The father was no less solicitous for the spiritual weal of his children, than was the mother.

“ Their welfare pleased him, their cares distress.”

But Mr. F. was of a very different temperament from his good wife.

“ A man severe he was, and stern to view.”

And thus, instead of copying the example of the tender bird, who every fond endearment tries—

“ To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,”

he was harsh, and unnecessarily stringent in the restrictions which he imposed upon his children in early years. This was supposed to have had a bad effect on the mind of W.

Too great a restraint upon children in early life is very mischievous in its influence. It is, however, in this matter difficult to determine when we have reached the mediate point.

Children, like adults, differ widely in their dispositions ; consequently, require very different treatment. This is the hinge on which the failings of

most parents, and schoolmasters also, turn. One extreme begets another. As the mind, strung to its uttermost tension for too long a period, suffers damage, so children, if too severely handled, are injured.

“Scratch the green rind of the sapling, or wantonly twist
it in the soil,
The scarred and crooked oak will tell of thee for centuries
to come.”

“We cannot put old heads on young shoulders,” as the old and well-worn aphorism goes. No ; and if we could, they would soon die, or become malformed. The gravity of the head would impose a restraint upon the rest of the members of the body which would be non-natural, and thus obstruct the healthy action and development of the whole.

It was here the father of W. F. was thought to have erred. Instead of trying each art, and meekly, but firmly, reproving each dull delay, he sought to drive and force W. to become religious. This was the good man's infirmity; his failings in the matter leaned to the side of virtue.

But to return to William. No sooner did he leave home to serve his apprenticeship, than he seemed to throw off every semblance of regard for things sacred. His lot was cast among the irreligious. A love for what is often very falsely called good company, was contracted, and on the heels of

this followed habits of tippling. The term of his apprenticeship wore away ; he became journeyman, and was soon afterwards married, while no change came over his life and conduct. He had long stood in the way of sinners, he now sat in the seat of the scorner ; his chosen associates were such as had "much to say against religion and religious people." This was a drop of poison in the cup of sorrow at which his parents now drank. Habits of a loose and profligate character sapped the foundations of a constitution which was naturally somewhat feeble, and he was compelled to seek a change of employment. About this time his parents died within less than twelve months one of the other.

Whatever natural grief W. felt at his loss, the event produced in him no moral change. He was soon after seen in his old haunts of dissipation. A few short months rolled by, while he continued to tread the giddy maze of folly, until suddenly the accident which terminated in his death befel him. We were sent for to visit him by a pious Wesleyan, and distant relative of his, to whom we are chiefly indebted for the above particulars, with perfect leave to make what use of them we might see proper.

The first visit we paid him, he was somewhat reticent and morose. We dealt with him in a kind and sympathetic way, concluding by asking him permission to pray before we departed. His reply was,

"Please yourself, sir." We did so, by calling upon God for Christ's sake to bless him, and show him his need of the Saviour.

On calling again to see him, and pointing out to him the awful necessity of being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, he remarked in a tart manner—

"It is not with me exactly as you think it is. I am not afraid to die."

Believing him to occupy a false position in relation to the way of salvation, we sought, in a somewhat cautious manner, to find his stand point. This cautious mode of procedure was adopted to avoid that excitement of his suspicions which should place him in an attitude of stout resistance, and thus defeat the purpose we had in view.

We had, as it were, to fondle him in order to ascertain the point on which he was most vulnerable.

We were not mistaken in believing him to be on a false foundation.

In answer to the questions, "Why are you not afraid to die?" "It is a serious thing to die." And "Why do you expect to go to heaven when you die?" He replied—

"We are all sinners, I do not know that I am any worse than other people; and God is merciful, I have nought to fear that I am aware of."

The general mercy of God, without any regard to

the demands of offended justice, or the claims of dishonoured law, was the ground on which his hope of future happiness was built. We put the following question to him. "Do you expect to get to heaven without Jesus?"

"I do," was his reply.

I read to him several portions of God's Word, amongst the which were the following passages—

"We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."—Eph. i. 7.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

Having read them, we begged of him for an explanation, but he contented himself by simply observing—

"They have a meaning, I s'pose."

We endeavoured to show him that redemption's scheme was a Divine expedient to meet a terrible exigency in human history. A plan, through which the world receives the benefits of God's love, in a way which does honour to Himself, by magnifying His mercy, extolling His justice, reflecting His holiness, making manifest His wisdom, while, at the same time, it exhibits His boundless compassion for a perishing world, and places pardon within the reach of all.

In a somewhat subdued tone of voice he replied, "It may be so. I have no reason to doubt your honesty, but I don't see it; the Lord help me. This was what my father and mother believed; this I was taught at home."

He here wept and sobbed heavily. As his strength waned, there was a marked change in his behaviour towards ourselves. The last time we visited him, he responded aloud to the petitions which went to heaven on his behalf.

We were told the last words he distinctly articulated were, "What a sinner I have been! Lord have mercy upon me, for Jesus' sake!"

Thus died W. F. in the flower of his age. His widow yet lives in the town of —.

REMARKS.

Let no pious parent despair of seeing his children brought to God; but let such be careful to exemplify the Gospel before their children in the ordinary walks of life; this combined with timely and prudent counsel, will seldom fail of being blessed in its results, if accompanied by believing prayer to God.

Parents must be assiduous to make their children feel that they attach primary importance to religion. If ever our children, by word or deed on our

part, are made to feel that religion has a secondary place in our life plans, or is looked upon as a sort of useful adjunct, rather than the one thing needful, they are injured vitally. Our spiritual interests are real and supreme. This, our children must be made to see and feel. This is of the uttermost importance.

Our children are born with a fallen nature. Naturally they do not love the things that make for their peace. Hence, the holier the atmosphere in which they live, the deeper we sometimes find their detestation of things spiritual and heavenly. Good men may have wicked children, for whose conduct they are in no wise blame-worthy. The sons of Samuel walked not in the steps of their father, "but turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment."—1 Samuel viii. 3.

Let us not, as parents, exact from our children a seriousness of demeanour unbecoming their years. "If once habitually by word, look, or deed you demand of a child the gravity and perfection of riper years, your unreasonable demand is met by a counterfeit supply, and you receive a discount in sheer hypocrisy; and, what must be that character which results from acting a lie in contempt of the highest authority all the day long? Still, such is the popular notion of religious training—the sons of even thoughtless, worldly men have, in my opinion, no

spiritual disadvantages to compare with such enforced religion. Many a youth has had such unnatural restraints put upon him, and has been sickened with serious advice, out of time and out of season, and has heard the name of the Almighty so often associated with childish peccadilloes of tops, whips, and marbles, that the spell is broken for ever." And, no sooner do such go from beneath the eye of their taskmasters than they cast aside all seeming regard for religion, as did W. F.

Let us learn from the history of J. F. and W. F. the importance of having correct views of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. This is a vital matter, yet, vital as it is, it is a matter in relation to which there exists much laxity, even among professing christian. We have heard Primitive Methodists talk as if it were a matter of no moment whether their children were taught in a Primitive Methodist, Unitarian, or Roman Catholic Sabbath School. What, is it of no importance to us and our children whether we have a merely human, or a Divine Saviour to trust in for life and death, time and eternity? Again, are the errors of Romanism so innocent and inoffensive as to make it a matter of pure indifference whether they are imbibed by our children or not? We have not so learned Christ. A man's views and beliefs of Gospel-truth regulate, and of necessity control and

shape the whole of his life and conduct in relation thereto. They mould both the inner and outer man. They give complexion to his whole character. We are saved by the belief of the truth, but it is not by the belief of any truth, but the truth as it is in Jesus. All truth is not Gospel truth. Fathers and mothers, heed not for one moment, we beseech you, such as would sing,—

“For modes of faith, let senseless bigots fight,
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.”

Just as if a man's life might be right, while his views of Christ and the plan of salvation were as far wrong as it were possible for them to be. Jesus taught no such doctrine. He said to his enemies, “if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” Without denying the possibility of salvation within the pale of systems like the Romish Church, we nevertheless aver that the salvation of such as are identified with such systems is greatly imperilled. Salvation is sometimes found associated with a low degree of religious intelligence and even rude ignorance, but in such cases the root of the matter is there. Christ, who is the core of Christianity, is held by the hand of faith; there is, in such cases, no denial of his divinity, no ignoring of his atonement, no substituting of good works for Jesus as the ground of the soul's hope. Christian life is a fruit

of Christian faith. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast learned from the New Testament ; that good thing which has been committed unto thee, keep with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.



CHAPTER IV.

THE FORCE OF TRUTH.

"God, indeed, tells us of hell, but it is to persuade us to flee to heaven. His voice of terror is like the scream of the mother-bird when the hawk is in the sky."—*Guthrie*.



B. was a man in the middle of life when we were first made acquainted with him; he was poor in purse, but was possessed of a good understanding, and was regarded by all who knew him as a clever workman.

It was a rare thing, indeed, to hear any one say any thing evil of A. To use his own words, "he hated dirty deeds."

Everything approaching to "meanness, dodging, and shuffling," he abominated, in fact, he paid scrupulous regard to his morals. In this way, the first forty years of his life were spent.

But, in this beautiful life, there was a capital flaw, a vital defect.

It was formed on a plan, the principle of which was honour, as that term is defined in the vocabulary of the worldling. This is the principle on

which multitudes are building up a reputation for goodness. It is a selfish principle, having regard to human esteem, purely for the sake of advantage. The applause of the world is what such covet. This is their superior aim ; they have their reward. Such a principle only moulds the outer life. It possesses no corrective influences for the heart, that fountain from whence issues a continual stream of thoughts, purposes, and plans.

A principle of honour has no breakwater of sufficient power to withstand the tide of passion and temptation which sometimes sets in upon the soul, when those passions and corrupt desires can be gratified in secret.

Such was the limited extent of its influence over A. B. This was his own confession.

But even while A. was thus anxious to stand well with his fellows, God, who is never at that point with sinners, not to care whether they sink or swim, are damned or saved, never as he said, "let him alone."

The Good Shepherd followed this lost one, and caused him to hear his voice. He grew more dissatisfied with himself every day. He became more and more unhappy, and many times, while his old associates gathered around him, seeming almost ready to worship him, because of his intelligence and supposed goodness, he was loathing himself at

heart, yea, abhorring himself as vile beyond description. "I many times," said he, "strove to get rid of my uneasiness, sometimes by reading books of a diverting character, sometimes having recourse to one thing and sometimes to another. And, at times, I partially succeeded ; but, it was only for a season. The lull was transient, the peace was false. The truth is, the Lord was working upon my mind, giving me to see that my life was not what it ought to be. This I did not see at the first as I see it now. While I was respected by most people, it no more entered my head to do such and such things, because they were pleasing to God, than it did to fall down and adore the stump of a tree."

In this way A. B. lived for some time, being some days better and some days worse.

There was alternately a storm and a calm. The patient sought to cure himself by the use of narcotics, but they were all neutralised by the specifics of his soul's Physician, in whose hand was the truth, and who by a vigorous application of the same to his heart and conscience, discovered unto him the real nature of the disease, with its cause, proper remedy, symptoms, also, its immediate and remoter consequences.

He went on to say, "I was one sabbath induced to go and hear one of your ministers preach. The text was, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' Every word

seemed like a dagger in my heart. I was cut to pieces, and went home hating myself as it were, and everybody else. When I got into the house, nothing was right for me. Even my children, of whom I was so fond, seemed as if they had lost their charms. My wife could hardly either speak or look right for me, and my past life appeared hateful. I was perfectly miserable. I thought if everybody knew as much about me as I knew myself, there would be no one who would speak to me.

“I was compelled to look within, and a frightful picture I saw. v

“I took up a Bible to read. I had no sooner done so, than something seemed to whisper, ‘Thou hast nothing to do with the Bible, nor the Bible with thee.’ I immediately put it on one side, feeling as if it contained nothing for me, but much against me. But I now see it all, I see it all. I heard you preach from Rom. viii. 6. That sermon did me a deal of good. I felt that there was enmity between me and God, but that it was all on one side, that is, on my side, not on the Lord’s, no, not on the Lord’s.

“I gathered much encouragement from the sermon, and went home, not hating the preacher as I had often done, but resolving to turn the whole of my attention to spiritual matters ; which resolve I put into practice.

"I read my Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim, James's Anxious Enquirer, with other books of a similar character. The light shone brighter and brighter to the perfect day. From that day my path became clearer and clearer.

"I now see one grave error I fell into. I did not make my case known to the people of God. I kept it to myself, feeling afraid to tell any one. In this I acted foolishly, I see did.

"But, now, sir, you see me, I am going into eternity. I have no prospect of getting better, none at all. I am, comparatively, a young man; I have a wife, and she is not a strong woman; I have three children, and they lie near my heart; they are only young, not able to render their mother much assistance yet."

Here the pent-up feeling of his heart burst forth in a flood of tears. On recovering himself, he resumed:—

"I can leave them all with confidence in the hands of that God who led me by a way I knew not, making darkness light before me, and crooked things straight."

At his request, we here read him the 34th and 37th Psalms. We also read him several favourite texts, amongst the which were the following:—Rom. viii. 6; Jer. xvii. 9; Jer. xxiii. 29; Heb. iv. 12; Heb. ix. 13, 14.

No sooner had we closed the book, than he said, "I see such a fulness of meaning in that last passage, that I can never describe."

After this, there was a period of weakness, pain, and decay ; when the closing scene came on the 24th of May, 186—.

His last words were, "Christ is all in all ; yes, all in all. This is sufficient, I ask no more."

Thus passed away the spirit of A. B.

"The night dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary, worn-out mind, expire more softly."

REMARKS.

The truth that grappled with the soul of A. B. has lost none of its force. It never will. It will ever be the power of God unto salvation. A faithful proclamation of it will also ever be more or less successful in convincing sinners, and quickening believers. A faithful legate of Christ will not always be loved, and seldom applauded, for his fidelity, save by the faithful few.

Many will say of him as Ahab said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

But woe be to the messenger of the Cross who conceals any part of his message, for fear it should be unpalatable to his hearers.

Terrible, indeed, will be the doom of those preachers who stoop to fawn, and seek for wealth, fame, and power,

“By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour.”

No greater curse can befall a community than to have a faithless ministry. Preachers might easily avoid unpalatable subjects by exercising caution in the selection of text ; but not indeed will be the hell of those who do, through fear of persecution. A person once remarked of the Rev. R. T——, as a preacher, “He always sends me home to pray.” A good sign this. Better to send men home loathing themselves, than to send them away eulogizing the preacher. We often hear people, on leaving the house of God, saying, “O, what a precious man, what a sweet, rich, and sonorous voice ; what choice language, what beautiful imagery.” A poor sign this for the hearer. Such are, in general, wayside hearers ; they are barren and unfruitful hearers. The church is, we opine, allowing herself to be too much moulded and fashioned by the opinions of the irreligious and worldly relative to the matter and manner of her pulpit ministrations. She is partially becoming the slave of that she was born to subdue.

The mind of Jesus must be the measure, and His *will the law of things*, then we shall not labour in *vain*.

We have, in the history of A. B., a solution to the problem: Why have we so many delays in conversion?

Anxious enquirers and trembling penitents carry their aching sense of guilt about with them, without making their state known to either minister or members of the Church, who would by reason of their experience, be able to render them valuable assistance. Some want to be religious and no one to know of it; others, like A. B., shrink from making known their state through pride and shame. There are also those who, like Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, listen to Mr. Worldly Wiseman; they consult reason rather than Scripture; confer with flesh and blood instead of going at once to Jesus. Such souls, however, like the poor woman in Mark v. 26, grow worse instead of better, until they touch the Saviour by the hand of faith. By grace are ye saved through faith. It is, believe and live. This is heaven's artless, unencumbered plan. God's method of saving sinners.



CHAPTER V.

VAUNTED SCEPTICISM.

"There's a sort of littleness in the minds of men of wrong sense, which makes them more insufferable than mere fools, and has the further inconvenience of being attended by an endless loquacity."—*Steele*.



IVE us your hand, gentle reader, and let us lead you, at least in thought, to a narrow street in the town of ——. Placing yourself at the bottom of it, and looking towards the top, you will see eight or ten dingy looking houses, which stand a little higher, and jut a little more prominently forward than the rest.

It was to one of these sombre looking, stone walled cottages, that we were one afternoon sent for, to visit a woman who was reported to be dying, and who died ere we left her, without giving any evidence of having obtained a preparation for the solemn eternity upon which she was called to enter.

On leaving the house, we had hardly cleared the door, ere a woman who was standing at the opposite side of the street, evidently watching our return, beckoned us to her, and said, "May be, sir, ye'll

have no objection to go see a man that's poorly, up there," pointing with her finger in the direction of the house where he lived.

She went on to say, that he was "fearful ill," and was "a strange fellow, he didn't believe there's either a God or a devil."

Fixing our eye on the house as pointed out by the woman, we made our way towards it, quietly lifting up our heart to the Lord, that this "strange fellow," as the woman called him, might be given to see and feel that there was both a God and a devil; also, a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

In the house of the wretched man, everything gave unequivocal evidence of extreme poverty, squalor, and slatternliness. Beside the wall there stood

"A chest, contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day."

There was no varnished clock clicking behind the door, no white-washed wall, or nicely sanded floor. A more miserable-looking place, bearing the name of home, our eyes never beheld. It was a filthy place, and what H. Kirke White said of his study window, applied literally and truly here. There was

"A window vainly stuff'd about,
To keep November breezes' out;
So crazy, that the panes proclaim,
That soon they mean to leave the frame."

We were shown up a ricketty pair of stairs, with seven steps of an ascent.

Here we found the "strange fellow," lying on what was in reality a mass of dirty rags, gasping like a hard-hunted beast for breath. The strong man was belaboured by an arm stronger than his own.

No sooner did he see us than there was a momentary cessation in the heavings of his big chest, he looked at us for some moments in a very inquisitive manner, scanning us from head to foot.

No sooner did we attempt to direct attention to spiritual matters, than he closed his eyes, as if afraid to encounter our glance, and not for a moment again, during the time that we stayed, did he attempt to open them.

After praying with him, to which he offered no audible response, we left him, promising to see him again.

We called again to see him, the day following, and found him apparently considerably easier in body.

He was also less taciturn than on the previous day, and replied to the enquiries we made about his soul—

"I want no help of that sort while I am alive, and it will be of no use to me when I am dead. I'll try to believe that you mean well, but you can do me no good, it's no use to try."

"Why not?" we enquired.

"Ah, you don't know me. I have denied that there is a God ; I have tried to make myself believe it. And also that there is no devil, and that religion is all priestcraft, and the work of cunning rulers, for the purpose of awing men into submission."

To other enquiries which we made, he acknowledged that he had never been able entirely to quell the suspicion that, after all, things might not be as he would fain have made himself believe they were.

"I have not only," said he, "tried to satisfy myself that death was nothing, and that there was nothing after death, but that when we were dead, we were done with, but I have also tried to make others believe the same thing.

"All this is no secret. My neighbours will tell you the same thing."

On being closely pressed on the point, he confessed that the wish was father to the thought.

On reasoning with him on the misery, folly, and absurdity of such notions, he said—

"The only thing I now fear, is that I must die as I have lived."

We assured him that there was no necessity why he should perish in his sins. We here read him several passages of Scripture.

Again and again we repeated our visits, each time

finding him apparently more humble and penitent. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He who opened the heart of Lydia, opened the eyes of this "strange fellow." He became very docile and teachable. He mourned on account of his sins, and humbled himself beneath the hand of God, who exalted him in due time by pardoning his sin and making him his child.

The last time we saw him, he exclaimed, "O what a wretch I have been. What a sinner I am. Lord help me, and let me have the same mercy thou gave to the dying thief."

In expressions of this sort, during the last few days of his life, he kept lifting up his heart to the Lord.

In this way this "strange fellow," as the good woman called him, died. Died, we firmly believe, relying on Christ alone for salvation; and here is rock, while all is sea beside. He sought for mercy and found it.

Late one evening, in the month of May, 186—, we received a pressing invitation to visit the abode of F. D., for the purpose of talking to him about his soul, as the messenger expressed it.

F. was not an utter stranger to us, inasmuch, as we had once or twice called at his house in the *course of our ministerial visits*, inviting him to the *house of God*, but without success.

His wife was an occasional attender at our chapel, and had, we were told, formerly been a member. But Mary D. was not now, to use her own words, what she formerly "was in religion."

She attributed this change for the worse to the conduct of her husband, who was called "a sort of sceptic or infidel," and did not like her to attend the house of the Lord, neither was he agreeable to take charge of the little ones at home while she was there.

The position of Mary D. in this respect is a very common one. Numbers of mothers have, week after week, to struggle with all the distracting and chafing cares inseparable from the management of a family of small children, unable to go up to the sanctuary of God, while their husbands (we call them such, though they ill deserve the name), refuse to bear any portion of the burden and privation of being debarred from the fellowship of the saints, by tending the children occasionally at home. Crushed in heart and borne down in spirit by continual harassment, many, under these circumstances, like Mary D., make shipwreck of faith.

We have known many such cases. Those "lords of creation" who are guilty in this matter, would do well to consider their marriage vow, and ponder Ephes. v. 25, also Col. iii. 19.

But to return to F. D. He was a man of about

forty-five years of age, short in stature, and somewhat "thick-set," as it is sometimes phrased, meaning corpulent or stout. He had a pair of small grey eyes, which always seemed leering, while they were half-concealed beneath his thick, shaggy eyebrows. The glance of those eyes was such as few people liked to encounter. He had also a pair of lips, of a thin and somewhat compressed shape, which seemed to indicate great firmness of purpose, if not a "dogged obstinacy." When he was in an ill-humour, few people liked to have to do with him. He was a farm labourer, and had, in the discharge of his duties, met with an accident, which, to human appearance, seemed likely to result in his death. Under these circumstances we were requested to visit him. We found him in a very gloomy and silent mood. It seemed as if a fierce conflict was going on within, a sort of battle between pride and conviction. He seemed somewhat pleased to see us, but at the same time appeared reluctant to acknowledge that such was the fact. He was not prepared to admit that we had been sent for at his request, though such, we were told, was the truth.

Prior to his affliction, he had sought to banish from his mind and heart everything of a serious nature, especially the Gospel. He was, to use the words of one of his neighbours, "one of those ridiculous fellows, who scoff at what they do not

understand, and pretend to teach what they know nothing about."

He was by the villagers called a sceptic.

"On the dubious waves of error toss'd,
The ship half-founder'd and his compass lost."

He knew Paine, Voltaire, and Volney, with a few others of the same school ; that is, he knew them by name, for, according to his own confession, the writings of some of them he had never read.

Those whom he cherished as his boon companions were such as could make merry with religion and religious people, jeer at and empty their buffoonery against the "Gospel Plan."

From these and other kindred sources he had raked together a few stale arguments, coarse jests, and witticisms, which were ever at his tongue's end ; but his armour never seemed to fit him, for alas ! master, it was borrowed. He acted the jack-daw in peacock's feathers.

A small band of satellites clustered around, being elated, while he in his nebulous manner dealt out to them his small jokes.

At the cordwainer's shop, he was a kind of oracle.

"Amazed, the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
How one small head could carry all he knew,
But past is all his fame."

There's an infidelity of the heart more subtle and stubborn than that of the head ; the latter may yield to the evidences, but, to the former, arguments and evidences are not "edged-tools." It yields to grace alone. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ?"

Such was the vaunted scepticism of F. D.

"An infidel in health—but what when sick ?
Oh, then a text would touch him at the quick."

Again and again, did we visit this doughty champion of error. His pot-companions all forsook him. His agonies of conscience became severe ; self-reproach stung him to the very core. What pained him the most of all was the thought that he had been so mean and hypocritical as to affect airs of scepticism, while in heart he never doubted the truth of the Gospel. And often, when the loudest, and most boastful, and arrogant in his professions of unbelief, he was at the same time seeking, by those very professions to stave off convictions which were rendering him miserable because of his sin.

We pointed out to him the way of salvation by faith in Christ. It seemed for a time as if all his hopes were to be swallowed up in despair. An agonizing sense of sin took hold of his heart, and his guilt and misery pressed him down with all the weight of a burden intolerable to be borne.

We endeavoured to encourage his eager and sin-stricken spirit, by shewing him that the very things at which he seemed to stumble, and over which we were afraid he would everlastingly fall, were the very difficulties and obstructions the Gospel was designed to obviate. A sense of God's infinite justice terrified him, while the remembrance of his sin haunted his mind night and day. In this anxious and unhappy state of mind he lived for two or three weeks, when the dawn of day beamed from above, nascent streaks of light, began to shoot athwart the gloom profound of his natural heart. He saw men as trees walking. But the light became brighter and brighter until it reached the perfect day. He saw salvation was possible, and possible consistently with all the requirements of justice, through the consideration of the Saviour's death. He hoped in the promise. He saw the plan. He believed on the Son of God. Salvation came to his heart. He rejoiced in the Lord. As he looked, he lived. His burden was removed by a process which admitted of no explanation. He arrived at the assurance of salvation, but not by a tedious process of inferential reasoning. His assurance of salvation was not based on mental conclusions, but was immediate and direct from the Lord. The Spirit bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. Penitence, faith, love, hope, and joy, were blended in

his soul, like colours in heaven's beauteous bow, suffusing it with a sacred mellowness divine, just as we have beheld a valley flooded with the golden beams of the orb of day.

The chamber where this recent convert was destined to meet his fate, was indeed privileged beyond the common walks of life, being on the verge of heaven.

A few more days of pain, hope, and joy, and the scene closed for ever. F. D. departed this life 186—, affording the world one more proof that there is mercy with God in Christ for sinners of all descriptions, and leaving the foes of truth one more testimony that

“Virtue, alone, has majesty in death.”

The body of F. D. lies in the churchyard of ———, there to abide the universal call to judgment.

REMARKS.

Pride of intellect and depravity of heart are the main, if not the only sources of infidelity. Men unduly exalt reason, and they do not like to retain a knowledge of God. He is not in all their thoughts. The thought that he spies out their ways, is irksome and hateful to them. “Let us cast away his cords, and break his bands asunder,” is the language of their hearts.

When they say, "There is no God," they only express a "monstrous wish," a wish which had no existence until virtue died. God is felt by such men to be greater than they, and to hold them amenable to His throne for their conduct. This chafes and irritates them, until they become like a bear bereaved of her whelps. They exclude God from their life's plan, but cannot rid themselves of the fact, that He can blow upon their best concerted schemes, and most elaborately framed projects, and they shall shrivel like a parchment scroll exposed to the action of a fierce fire, or vanish like the snow wreath in the glance of the sun.

Honest infidels are rarely to be met with. Like F. D., the pretensions of such, as a rule, are hollow and hypocritical. They are deceivers.

This kind of infidelity is, we believe, on the increase in our land, and the evil comes upon us, as Addison remarks, from a "few serious block-heads, that meet together with the zeal and seriousness of Apostles, to extirpate common sense, and propagate infidelity, which is often another term for nonsense.

These are the wretches, who, without any show of wit, learning, or reason, publish their crude conceptions with an ambition of appearing more wise than the rest of mankind, upon no other pretence than that of dissenting from them.

One gets by heart a catalogue of title-pages and editions ; and immediately, to become conspicuous, declares that he is an unbeliever. Another knows how to write a receipt, or cut up a dog, and forthwith argues against the immortality of the soul. We have known many a little wit, in the ostentation of his parts, rally the truth of the Scriptures, who was not able to read a chapter therein. These poor wretches talk blasphemy for want of discourse, and are rather the objects of scorn or pity than indignation. They are a sort of gamesters, who are eternally upon the fret, though they play for nothing. They are wedded to opinions full of contradiction and impossibility ; and, at the same time, look upon the smallest difficulty in an article of faith as a sufficient reason for rejecting it. But they know so little about religion and the grounds on which it rests, that their infidelity is but another name for their ignorance."

We are not surprised that there are those who reject the Gospel message ; this is one evidence to the truth of that message ; it is one of the fruits which the word of the Lord declares the tree of human nature would bear. There shall "come in the last days scoffers." We may say to those scoffers as Sir I. Newton said to Dr. Halley, "You should not talk of Christianity, for you have not studied it, and I have, and am certain that you

know nothing of the matter." David Hume owned to a clergyman that he had never carefully read the New Testament. But even where such have read it attentively, they overlook the fact, that man naturally lacks the seeing eye and feeling sense requisite to a proper understanding of its more spiritual truth. Such men often complain of the lack of evidence, while the real lack, and only lack, is an unwillingness on their part to submit to the proper mode of proof. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii. 17. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—1 Cor. ii. 14. We, says the Apostle, speaking of the knowledge of God in Christ which he and all true believers enjoyed, have received the Spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. If God has been pleased to reveal to faith, what remains dark to reason's glimmering eye, who shall say unto him, What doest Thou ? Such as deny the physician's skill to cure, while they reject his prescription, manifest their folly, so those who turn away from the truth, refusing to yield obedience to its own prescribed mode of proof, evince their enmity towards it, which is the very thing that dis-

qualifies them for a proper knowledge of what they are professedly in search of. Thick films rest on the visual organs of their minds. They love darkness rather than light, and it is unto them according as they desire. O would-be wiseacres! O consistency, whither art thou fled? Such men would have heaven do for them what they will not do for themselves. Surely, they must have thrown the last grain of common sense overboard before they reach such a point. None so blind as those who wont see. No clouds so dense as those of spiritual darkness. The wicked are children of the night.



CHAPTER VI.

CLINGING TO LIFE'S WRECK.

"Fools that we are,
We wish to be where sweets unwithering bloom,
But straight our wish revoke and will not to go."

Blair.



THE sentiments of Blair, with which we head this chapter, are true. We sing, talk, and read about the land of the holy, the happy, the free, where all are immortal and equal unto the angels ; but, as we near the dark passage that leads from this world to that, we shudder, and,

"Nature appall'd
Shakes off her wonted firmness."

We dread a wrench from life, and are afraid to fall into the hands of that surly porter, whose office it is to conduct us out of life's vestibule into the theatre of happy existence. This is our infirmity, it is nature shrinking back on herself, and startling, not always at the consequences, but at the act of dying. It is nature clinging to life. Love of life is one of the deepest and most eradicable instincts of our being, and only, where reason has lost

her balance, will she by her own act sever herself from time. One of her earliest dictates is, do thyself no harm. But, though it be an instinct of our nature to cling to life, that which renders death most formidable is sin. This is the sting of death ; extract the sting and you remove the pain and fear of dying. Nature clings to life, but grace makes man willing to die.

Death is terrible, indeed, to those whom he finds fondly cherishing the hope of spending long years to come amid the enchanting scenes of worldly pleasure and vanity, while they are unprepared for the world which lies beyond the bounds of time and space.

Of this we have met with several examples, out of which, we here furnish you, reader, with two.

Charles M. was the son of poor parents who were addicted to vices of the most vulgar description. They loved Charles, this was natural. He was their pride and boast, not because of his gracious moral qualities or intellectual might, as he possessed neither ; but, they gloried in his portly figure, fine face, and muscular strength. Prior to his death-illness, few could run quicker, leap higher, or lift a heavier weight.

When the drunkards met at the sign of ———

“ Where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retir'd,
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound
And news much older than their ale went round,”

Ne'er a one among them could laugh louder, or

"Club a smuttier tale."

He was the life and soul of all the village feasts and picnics for miles round.

He could, as it was said, sing a good song and make a company merry. His presence was eagerly sought by the frivolous and the dull, who have no resources of enjoyment within themselves. In this butterfly sort of life, he spent the first twenty-four years of his existence.

But, as the good old Book observes, "there is an end," the triumph of the wicked is short, and their mirth is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, noisy, but brief in its duration. Such have their pleasures, they are the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.

It was thus with poor Charles M. His calamity came suddenly. It was like the breaking-in of waters. It stole upon him like a thief in the night; full of anguish and distress, his pillow was planted with thorns. He was afraid to die, and longed to live. He clung to life's wreck like the drowning man clings to the spar.

It was, indeed, pitiful to hear his cries. The constant utterances of his lips were—

"I don't want to die, I don't want to die; can nobody do anything for me? Try another doctor,

try another doctor ; O let me live, let me live ; I do not want to die yet."

The love of life was so strong in him, that every effort we made to induce him to give himself up to the Good Physician, seemed unavailing. His only desire was to get better.

We laboured to show him, as how, that we should die no sooner, because we were ready to die, when he exclaimed,—

" I want to live, I want to live."

As the end approached, the extreme anguish of his mind seemed somewhat to subside. Like as the man, who for a capital crime is sentenced to death, clings to the hope of a respite, that only as the noose is being adjusted and the fatal bolt about to be withdrawn, he confesses, " I'm the man." So clung Charles M. to life's wreck, for wreck, indeed, it was.

The damps of the dark valley, gradually settled on his pale brow, and during the last few hours of the conflict, a peculiar insensibility crept over his soul, and in this torpid state the scene finished.

The last words, we were told, that he was heard to utter, were, " Lord, help me, God be merciful to me a sinner."

M. F. was a domestic servant in the town of M——, her mother was a widow, supported by

parochial aid, and was also a member of the Primitive Methodists, in the small village of B——.

The first time we saw M. she was young, fair, and beautiful—just budding into womanhood. Her physical stamina seemed of the most delicate texture. To look upon she was as fair as a flower, but as fragile too. She had not reached her twentieth year, ere a hacking cough, accompanied by the hectic flush, or as one calls it, “the rose of death,” sure precursors of that terrible disease which every year sweeps away so many of Britain’s loveliest sons and daughters, made their appearance.

The dire disease soon made dreadful inroads in a constitution which was naturally feeble. Strength forsook her limbs, and work became a burden ; she was compelled to leave her situation, and went home to die.

It was under these circumstances that we became familiar with M. and her mother. We had, previous to this, some slight acquaintance with them, from the fact that the mother was a member with us, and M. herself an attender at our chapel.

We were sent for to visit M. and saw at once that the mark of death was upon her. Day by day the colour fled from her face, while the attenuated hands with their protruding joints told a tale, that all could read but M. herself. She did not wish

to read it. The last fragment of hope of a recovery was soon banished from the bosoms of all, save the victim herself, who fondly clung to the idea that the enemy might yet be balked. She clung to this with a tenacity that was painful to witness, and occasioned much grief of heart to her dearest friends.

Though in no way deaf to religious counsel, the crowning wish of her heart was to mend. This was her daily prayer.

In a tender and plaintive manner, she said, "It is hard to die so young. I could like to live a few more years. O, I cannot bear the thought of dying now."

After praying with her, and reading to her several portions of God's Word, we left her, praying that she might have grace to enable her to say, and feel it too,

" Submissive to the will Divine,
I acquiesce and make it mine."

On calling again, we found her still chafed with the same restless and eager desire for recovery. At the suggestion of a female friend, and with M.'s consent, we sung part of that beautiful and well known hymn of Miss Alexander's, beginning at the verse,

" Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I'll strive to say,
Thy will, Thy will, O God, be done."

No sooner had we ceased singing, than the sufferer, taking her female friend by the hand, remarked,—

“I’m afraid I shall never from my heart be able to say, ‘Thy will, O God, be done.’ You know one reason why I am so wishful to get better ; another reason is my mother.” Here, she wept, but immediately rallied, and said,—

“If mother had been gone, I think I could have died without a murmur. You must pray for me, I need it. You know I do.”

From this time, there was a perceptible change in her spirit. She was never again heard to murmur, but once or twice heard to say,—

“I did not think it would come to this, I did not think I should die so soon.”

When weak and hoarse, so that it was with difficulty she could be heard, she said to a relation, “Fetch Mary K——, to sing me, ‘Thy will, O God, be done ;’ and tell Mr. M——, when you see him, that I can say, ‘Thy will, O God, be done.’”

Thus died M. F., in the twenty-first year of her age. Her sun went down while it was yet day, but it went not down amid the murky clouds of despair and guilt ; light from heaven gilded the valley. This cheered the widowed mother’s heart.

Mother and daughter have since met in heaven. An accident occurred to Mrs. F. in the streets of

M——, which in three weeks brought her to the grave ; but she finished her course with joy, and said, not long before she departed, “ I shall soon see Mary.”

Mother and daughter sleep side by side in the churchyard of A——, and, though memory over their tombs has no trophies raised, they yet live in the remembrance of many surviving friends and relations.

REMARKS.

The fear of death bringeth a snare ; a snare in which the feet of many good men and women become entangled, and are held captive all their life long. But for this purpose was the Son of God made manifest, that he might deliver them, who, through this fear, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Death is no enemy, but a friend to the good. Many mistake this friend for a foe. When St. Ambrose was about to die, his friends begged of him to implore of God, longer life ; he replied “ I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live with you ; nor am I afraid to die, because I have a good master.” Chrysostom, when suffering banishment from friends and comforts, and in prospect of death, wrote to Innocent, “ I have lived these three years an exile, exposed to pestilence, *famine*, war, sword, continual alarms, unutterable

solitude, and daily death ;” but, when on the verge of the river, he shouted, “Glory to thee, O God, in all things, thou art with me now.”

St. Cyprian, the martyr, exclaimed, when dying, “Thanks be to God, that pleases to loose me from the bonds of the body.”

Death is a port into which all mortals must sail. A happy shore, a safe haven, in which none ever suffered shipwreck unless they would. The great impediment to a happy death, is a bad life. The things we delight in while we live, will infest us when we die. Death itself produces no moral change, it comes and separates soul from body, and stereotypes our moral character, puts the unalterable stamp of decision upon it. As the tree falls there it continues to lie. As death leaves us, judgment will find us. In whatever current, or direction our affections and desire run at the moment of death, in that way will they flow to all eternity. If heavenly-minded then we shall be heavenly-minded for ever, if wicked, we shall be wicked for ever. See Rev. xxii. 11.



CHAPTER VII.

THE UNHAPPY BACKSLIDER.

"Most men who lose their religion, lose it by little and little; our enemies come upon us, like the pickpocket, stealthily; and many Christians lose all their treasure ere they are aware of it."

IN many churches the congregations swarm with backsliders, and of all the people with whom we talk, we find them the most miserable. Memory compels such to ruminate on the past, and such reflections are often of the bitterest character. They cannot forget the vines, figs, pomegranates, and grapes of Eshcol on which they were wont to feed, neither can they make the husks of swine's food minister that comfort and support which their great, though fallen nature, will at times crave for. Such souls have, in order to prop up their sinking spirits, and give a buttress to their dying hopes, recourse to most miserable subterfuges. They, willing to justify themselves, will seek to shift their blameworthiness; sometimes putting it on the minister. Such are never at a loss for their pleas; they are prolific in their deviation of such, but they fail to hit upon any that

will cheer their hearts, and banish from their souls that sense of guilt which lies at the bottom of all their misery. They experience an

“Aching void the world can never fill.”

E. R., at the time of which we write, lived in the somewhat populous village of H——. We were one day in the ordinary course of our ministerial visits, in the vicinity of her house, and, learning that she was ill, made it in our way to call and see her. She had, according to her own statement, been a member of the Church for more than ten years, in the early part of her life. She was now so far incapacitated for labour through affliction, as to render her absolutely dependent on her children for support. She had known, as she expressed it, “little or nothing but hard work,” but had now “got past it,” and was “little worth.”

Like thousands more, in the days of nature's decay, she must either be supported by her children, or go to the Union. The idea of doing the latter was extremely painful to her, she wept at the thought of it. “I think,” said she, “if I were to go there, I should die at once.” But the children of E. were not of the inconsiderate, unnatural, and selfish kind, who will allow their parents in old age and sickness, to be huddled into any hole or corner, supported by the cold and uncertain hand

of public charity, or even to perish for want, before they will in any way deny themselves, in order to assist them. It was, apparently, a pleasure to the children of E. to perform for her this act of duty. Duty, we say, for duty it certainly is, if it be in our power so to do. Few people are more tenderly cared for in life's declining years than was E. Her children had not forgotten the hardships, self-denial, and toil, she had endured on their behalf.

For nearly twenty years she had battled with the storms of life in a state of widowhood. She had also stood four days a week at the "wash-tub," for nearly the whole of that period. And this labour was often performed while she had but the scantiest supplies of food, and even that was often of the meanest sort, so that many times, as she expressed it, she "had been fit to sink into't earth."

In this way she eked out nearly a third of the period of life which is allotted to mortals. The end came. Every day is succeeded by night. The longest life comes to a close. It is written of the longest lived of earth's inhabitants, "he died." So with E. R.

She was fast approaching sixty years of age, when sickness came upon her in such a form, as from the very commencement to preclude all hope

of perfect recovery. She would never again, she said, "be worth much for work."

Thoughts of eternity began now to troop in, crowds of dark fears of the future, and miserable regrets over the past, haunted her mind. Busy, meddling memory called up in rapid and barbarous succession the rich, religious enjoyments of her earlier years. She was cut to the heart, stung to the quick at the remembrance of her folly, for amid all her struggles in life she had left out that which would have been a help and comfort to her in seasons of trial and hours of need. She had forgotten the Lord, but he had not forgotten her. He brought her sin to remembrance, made her iniquities to correct her, and her backslidings to reprove her. She was miserable because of her vileness and ingratitude in forsaking him whose goodness to her had been great and constant.

As we sat one day by her bedside, she said, "O, how good the Lord is, and how good he has been to me. I was converted when I was seventeen years of age, joined the Wesleyans and kept my religion for ten or twelve years, and nobody could enjoy more of the Saviour's love than myself at that time. I could have walked miles to hear the Gospel preached, and many times when I have been in the chapel it has been heaven upon earth. The Bible, and the Pilgrim's Progress were books that I never

grew tired of. But I gradually lost my hold of Christ. I lost the clear, sweet, and bright views of Jesus and his Word that I had when I was first converted. Then temptation came upon me—I got married.”

Here, she sobbed heavily, and on rallying, resumed, “This was my first wrong step. This was the stile into the bye-path. I married an ungodly man. I thought, I should have so much influence over him, that, after marriage, he would attend the house of God, and would soon be converted. In this I was deceived. In many respects he made me a good husband, but he had no heart for religion, neither did he give me any encouragement. This became a sore trial to me. I begun to neglect the means of grace, especially, my class; and I fancied, when I went, that the members did not regard me with that degree of kindness which they had formerly manifested, but were distant and shy; and not one of them, even the leader himself, ever came to look after me or invite me to go again. I thought if I had been rich, I should not have been so neglected. Hard thoughts of my fellow creatures began to fill my mind, and, by little and little, I lost all and became a backslider; and, here I am, a poor, miserable creature; the Lord forgive me.”

We talked and prayed with her, also read to her several portions of Scripture bearing upon such a

course of life, and God's willingness to pardon such sinners. We also related to her the following example of a backslider finding mercy :—

“A young man, who was studying for the ministry, became an infidel through reading the works of Dr. Coombe. In this sceptical state he lived for some time, when he was taken suddenly ill. When he began to think of dying, he found himself all unprepared. His new sentiments hovered like dismal clouds around his sick bed, that not a star of hope shone through. He reasoned from effect to cause. ‘Those new sentiments,’ said he, ‘have brought my mind into this miserable condition, and as the fruit is bad, the tree must be bad also. ‘He that followeth me,’ says Christ, ‘shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ given him, therefore, as I am walking in darkness, void of the light of life, it must be because I have left the Saviour. I will at once return to him and seek his face.’ This resolution was at once put into practice. He found his way back to the Good Shepherd and faithful Bishop of Souls. He was again made happy in Jesus, and went home to tell his friends what God had done for his soul, and afterwards became a minister of the Gospel, and was wont to relate God’s dealings with himself in order to encourage such sinners to come boldly to the Lord.”

This anecdote being related, she replied, "If the Lord had not been so good to me, I think, I could have hoped in Him ; but as it is, I feel ashamed to come. It seems so ungrateful to come now."

We laboured to show her that the goodness of the Lord, which is unchangeable, instead of filling sinners with shy distrust, ought to encourage their hopes. As time wore away, her acute anguish of mind seemed to abate, while the day star of hope arose, gilding the horizon of her prospects.

The Bible became her daily companion, and prayer her constant exercise.

The last time we saw her, she said, "Those texts that you pointed me out have been a blessing to me. Aye, a great blessing. Praise God for what he's done for me."

"I once was blind, but now I see.
I on the brink of ruin fell ;
Glory to God, I'm out of hell."

Two weeks more of pain and struggle, and the fight was finished.

Her daughter stood by her in her last moments, and told us that her last words were—

"Lord Jesus, I look to Thee, help me ; Thou hast helped me, and Thou wilt never leave me."

Thus died the widowed E. R. Her body lies in the churchyard of —, while her children are comforted with the hope of meeting her in heaven.

One dark, windy night in December, 18—, while labouring in the ——n circuit we were about to retire to rest, when a loud and hurried knock was heard at the door. On its being opened, a messenger requested our immediate attendance at the dwelling of a female, who was said to be dying without religion. Complying with the urgent call, and slipping on our overcoat, we hastened away. The snow was falling rapidly, the wind howling mournfully, as it swept through the streets and pent alleys. A more wintry night we never remember having encountered ; as we trod our way, battling with the furious elements, we felt our mind impressed with strange thoughts in relation to the misery of the lost in hell, upon whose guilty heads the wrath of God shall beat in one eternal storm. God shall rain upon them snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup ; while all hope of being saved shall be taken away.

On reaching the abode of the unhappy woman, to whose afflicted mind we had come to seek to administer relief, we found her dwelling in a miserably dilapidated place. As we made our way up stairs the steps creaked beneath our feet, so as to excite our fears of being unceremoniously precipitated into some cellar or coal hole. On reaching the landing, we saw at a glance that stern poverty

or rank improvidence obtained. Everything bespoke want. The furniture was of the rudest, antique, and most quaint description.

In one corner of the place there lay a sleeping infant, swathed in rags, with unwashed hands and face; its hair was matted and entangled like the mane of an unbridled colt.

The dying woman was stretched on a straw pallet, the covering flung over her attenuated frame was insufficient to protect her from the cold which found its way through the shattered squares of the window, some of which were partially stuffed with rags, while a few red embers flickered at the bottom of the grate. The poor creature shivered of cold.

The countenance of the sufferer bore traces of great bodily pain, which was augmented to intensity by her extreme mental anguish. She was unprepared to die. Her sin and guilt pressed upon her with all the force of a burden intolerable to be borne. A probation of seventy years had been afforded her, but madly perverted.

The past of her history had been all but one scene of rebellion against God, disloyalty and disaffection to Christ and the interests of his kingdom.

She had, as she stated, at one time, for a short period, been "in the way to heaven," but had abandoned the Rock of her salvation. Now, the hand of death was upon her, the work of a lifetime was

crowded into a few short hours, and those of the most adverse character by reason of her heavy affliction.

An invisible and irresistible power was compelling the shrinking spirit to advance towards the gulf from which it recoiled with horror.

"I am dying, and I am not prepared to die. My sins are not pardoned. O Lord help me, and I will serve thee.

These, with other expressions of a similarly painful character, were given utterance to by her in such a pitiful tone as to draw tears from the eyes of all present.

We attempted to comfort her with the assurance that God was ready to pardon, and that none who came with a penitent, believing heart were rejected. The name of Jesus had, however, no charms for her; the very mention of it seemed to give intensity to her grief. It awakened within her the bitterest recollections of the past; mercies slighted, grace abused, opportunities neglected, convictions resisted, and vows unpaid.

In our appeals to the throne of grace on her behalf, we felt a peculiar degree of embarrassment. In this hopeless and unhappy state of mind we left her.

In three short hours after this she went into eternity, leaving no ground on which friends could

rest a hope that she had realized the mercy of God unto eternal life.

“The salt may lose its seasoning power,
And never, never find it more.”

REMARKS.

A backsliding state is much to be deprecated. Such souls are of all men most to be pitied, however much they are to be blamed. “Were I,” said one of this class to us, “to tell you the horrible feelings I have had since I went back into the world, your hair would stand on an end.” Such souls can never blot from memory’s page the past of their history. This can never be. They will carry the remembrance of their earthly sojourn with them into eternity. Christ and his Cross will compel the attention of such in hell, which will greatly heighten their misery. This will barb the arrow that shall for ever rankle in the minds of the damned.

Few people become backsliders suddenly. It is a rare thing, though possible, for a believer to fall at once from an exalted state of grace into open and flagrant vice. If such do fall into open sin, the fall is usually preceded by a gradual process of declension. There is death at the heart. The tree may be covered with foliage, while the dry rot is *going on* within, and when the tempest comes the

crash is heard, and the cause of its downfall is revealed. There was internal decay. It is so in most cases of backsliding. The heart loses its relish for spiritual food, relish for the means of grace dies ; where such is the case, death is at hand ; spiritual consumption having set in, mortality soon ensues. Let the living, zealous, and active of Christ's flock look after such as manifest symptoms of declension. We become uneasy if a member of our families manifests loss of appetite and evinces signs of failing health ; shall we be less concerned when the brethren of Jesus show signs of spiritual weakness, disease, and death ? Go after such ; try to arouse, stimulate, and save them. Jesus loves them, and will help and bless you in your efforts to reclaim them.

Christian reader, are none of thy brethren or sisters evidencing symptoms of declension ? If they are, go after them, seek at once to arrest the progress of the dire disease of their apostacy. Prevention is better than cure. Go, my brother ; go, my sister, and go at once ere death overtakes them. Go with tears in thine eyes, love in thine heart, and the sweet words of Gospel truth on thy lips, and who can tell, but what thou, even thou, shalt this day save a soul from death and hell. Lay aside shame and false delicacy, be not mealy-mouthed ; be faithful, and Jesus will bless thee and make thee

a blessing. We have known many backsliders reclaimed through the efforts of the humblest of Christians. Never let thy conduct, reader, say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper." In this matter the members of many of our Churches are verily guilty; they evince little or no interest in the spiritual weal of even those who meet in the same class. This is a reproach to the Church; let us seek to roll it away and give the world evidence of our love to Jesus by well-directed efforts to save backsliders, with which many of our congregations abound. Infidelity will then see, that we love one another.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE DESPONDING BELIEVER.

"I believe that no one in his senses will deny that there always have been, and still are at this day, numbers of Christians remarkable for their holiness and faithfulness, who are still often sorely troubled with doubts and fears about their safety for another world."—*Anonymous*.



OD'S people are not all Mr. Greathearts, there are many timid folks among them. Mr. Feeblemind, Mr. Ready-to-halt, Mrs. Fearing, Mrs. Doubting, and a host of others of a similar character. Numbers of Christians spend much time in Doubting Castle. Such rarely stand for long together on the hill called by the immortal allegorizer, "Clear." Some of the many thieves that infest the road leading from Jericho to Jerusalem rob them of all their hope and comfort, as Faintheart, Mistrust, and Guilt robbed Mr. Little Faith, in Dead Man's Lane. The course of such heavenward is a chequered one.

"Clouds and darkness oft distress them,
Great and many are their fears.
Anxious cares and thoughts perplex them."

They are "babes and unskilful in the word of righteousness," having need of the milk of comfort and gentle nursing. Instead of nourishing themselves by the words of faith and of good doctrine, and thus growing up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, they have to be fed with diluted meat. No souls require to be more delicately and dexterously handled than do these. Weakness, not wickedness, is what hinders them. In the class, band-meeting, or lovefeast they seldom speak; and if they do, they rarely go beyond, I hope the Lord will take me to himself at last; Lord help me. These are the Lord's little ones, the feeble-minded whom Paul exhorts the strong to comfort. They are in the faith, but weak, and by reason of their infirmities are babes all their life long. But though babes in Christ they are to be tenderly watched over. Heaven loves them, and the Church must care for them. The following example will illustrate or make good our position:—

H. E. was a person in the middle of life, when we first made her acquaintance. She was converted to God while young in years, and continued a member of the ——— Church to the period of her death. At the time of her conversion, the change in her life and conversation was so decided as to leave, on the minds of all who knew, no doubt as to the

reality of the work which, by the grace of God had been accomplished in her. But, she was ever regarded by those who best knew her, as one of the Saviour's little ones. She was given to despond. Her name was Mrs. Doubting and Fearing. She lived on the dark side of the hill, and took hold of everything by the worst handle. She could never see the cloud's silver lining.

It was the same with her in relation to both worlds. If a small calamity befel the family, H. saw nothing but the Union Workhouse for them.

This was her infirmity. Her constitutional temperament had much to do with it, hence, the careful mode of treatment which her case required. As she drew near the dark river, her doubts and fears seemed to increase ; she was literally, through the fear of death subject to bondage. This was a source of much anxiety to the minds of those about her. The enemy sorely beset her. It is difficult to persuade souls like H. that their state and condition is different from what they feel it to be ; they are continually groping within themselves for evidences of their safety, and making a sort of microscopical analysis of their frames and feelings to assure themselves that all is well. This is the thermometer by which they measure themselves. It was so continually with H. In this perplexed and unhappy state of mind she lived, and for the last six weeks of her *life she rarely seemed to enjoy a gleam of sunshine.*

As we continued to visit her, we selected from among our books, anecdotes, incidents, and examples which were deemed most appropriate to the state of her mind ; reading portions of Romaine's Life of Faith, The Last Hours of the Rev. Thomas Scott, the eminent commentator, who had, when dying, a terrible battle with diffidence, also the last few pages of the Life of the Rev. John Smith, who was powerfully tempted and tried while fording Jordan ; which seemed to afford her some degree of comfort, and inspire the hope that He who had in their cases rebuked the adversary and delivered the prey from the mighty, would not suffer her to perish at last.

“ O, how unworthy I am ! What a poor miserable sinner I am ! Lord Jesus, forsake me not utterly !

“ Leave, O leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.”

were among the last words that were heard to escape from her lips. Like Bunyan's Christian, she was ready to sink in the deep waters, but found safe footing ere she got across. Death did its work rapidly in the last few hours, but through the goodness of God, she retained her consciousness to the last moment, and whispered, we were told, when stepping into the flood, “ I am dying ; yes, I am dying, but I can say, I am the Lord's ; O yes, O

yes. Is not this sufficient? It is. O yes, O yes."

Thus comfort came down, her drooping soul to raise, and

"Her last faltering accents whispered praise."

Thus passed away this timid and desponding soul, to be no more subject to the infirmities of this mutable state.

REMARKS.

It has been said that God sometimes puts his children to bed in the dark, but when they awake they shall find themselves on the sunny banks of immortal blessedness, where all is light, life, daylight, and liberty.

The valley of death to the good, is sometimes peopled with horrid apparitions, tall and ghastly, and spectres grim. Satan is the lion of the evening, and if he cannot prevent the christian entering the pearly gates of the everlasting city, he will hang heavy on his wings, to retard his progress thitherwards, and will also make his passage as rough as possible. He will dispute every inch of the ground, especially the last pass, in which we shall have to fight more valiantly than Léonidas and his chosen band in the straits of Thermopylae,

who fell to a man, before the immense odds against which they contended ; but the Christian does not fall, he only seems to fall, or, like the fabled Antæus of Lybia, who, every time he fell to mother earth, rose with renewed vigour, the Christian falls in death, to rise superior to his foes for ever.

The safety of the believer in death does not depend on his frames and feelings, but on the faithfulness and power of his Saviour. Again, good men may be unreasonably depressed under the near prospect of death, from satanic assaults, or the "mere operation of natural causes." Mr. Thomas Scott, to whom reference has been made, was led to take this view of his case, as offering a proper solution to it. "While good men may be unreasonably depressed in prospect of death, bad men may be elevated from the mere operation of natural causes." And to prove how little any merely mental condition of calmness in the dying sufferer, to which affectionate friends cling so anxiously, can be depended on, Dr. Moore says that the bodily condition immediately preceding death, generally produces, or, at least, is accompanied by such a quiescence of mind, that the volition itself seems to slumber, or consent to death, and there is almost always, after long and great debility, a peaceful anticipation of the coming event.

H. Alford says, "After forty years experience of

the great number to whom it has been my painful professional duty to have administered in the last hours of their lives, I have felt surprised that so few have appeared reluctant to go to the 'undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.' * *

Many, we may easily suppose, have manifested this willingness to die, from an impatience of suffering, or from that passive indifference, which is sometimes the result of debility and extreme bodily exhaustion. Doubts and fears may harass the saint in his departing moments, while the sinner may be free from them. We were sent for to pray with a man who had happened an accident, which threatened him with a speedy death. Up to the moment of the accident he had lived a wicked life, and now that he was suddenly brought face to face with death, he seemed to possess no proper concern for his soul. His agonizing cry was, "O God, take me out of my misery."

"He had no hope,
Yet he knew no fear."

Such souls as these get over Jordan without much ado, just as Ignorance got across the river by the aid of Mr. Vain Hopes, who ferried him over. But when such arrive at the gates of the

* London Review.

metropolis of the world, they will be met with a demand for their "certificate," when horror and consternation will seize them, and they will find that there is "a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven."

Infidelity has often, in order to make out a case, or, if possible, secure an indictment against the Gospel, been found raking amid the ashes of the past, to collect stories of the doubts, fears, and depressions by which the pious have been troubled in death. But the doubts, fears, and depressions of the saints in death, are very different things from the gloom, mental anguish, terrible ravings, and horrible forebodings which have been witnessed in connection with the deathbed of some of the leading members of the school of bragging unbelief. Voltaire, for example. The woman who waited upon him was so terrified in witnessing his dying horrors, that she resolved never to attend another sick person unless she could be assured that he was not an infidel. Reader, art thou one of the Lord's little ones? Is thy name Little Faith? Hope thou in God, thou shalt yet praise Him; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. The safety of the saints in death does not depend on any amount of comfort they may then enjoy, but on Jesus, the *Almighty One*. Neither is the safety of God's people

endangered by sharp conflicts with the devil. He who is for them is more than all that can be against them. The saints always die safely. They die with their armour on, but they die wreathed with the victor's laurels. Sinners often pass away like "lambs," as Bunyan puts it, but they are blindfolded; and were the eyes of such opened to see what awaited them beyond the cold, gurgling waters of death, they would "roar like lions." See to it, reader, that thy hopes of heaven are well founded. The hope of the ungodly shall perish; it shall be as the giving up of the ghost.



CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIUMPHANT SAINT.

"Let us, then, not pity those who are gone hence unto the Father, but rather pity ourselves, who have to endure the separation."—*Felix Neff*,



ONE calm and most beautiful evening in the lovely month of June, 186—, we made it practicable to walk a couple of miles for the purpose of visiting E. S., who was a prisoner of hope in her sick room. It was one of those evenings sweet, in which the good man feels as if heaven and earth were one. All nature was in her gayest livery clad; the little feathery tribes were hopping from spray to spray, and straining their little throats in warbling forth their notes of praise; while myriads of tiny insects were floating on their feeble pinions, poised in the circumambient air; the cattle were browsing on the hills, or had sunk to rest on their couch of fairest green, beneath the shade of branching trees extended wide; the departing sun was bathing the mountain summits with floods of golden light, and tinting the fleecy

clouds with streaks of every hue ; while the zephyrs mild fanned the face of the ploughman,

“ As he homeward plods his weary way.”

All nature was instinct with life and tremulous with devotion. All things seemed like so many ministering spirits, intent on augmenting man's sum of bliss, while he alone seemed insensible to his Maker's goodness.

On reaching the humble but clean and tidy home of E. S., the suffering saint, who was young and beautiful, we found her pale, attenuated, and in the last stage of a terrible disease, which baffled the ingenuity and bade defiance to the skill of the medical faculty, and also mocked the efforts of love to save. One short stride, and we were brought from a scene where all was life, joy, beauty, and activity, to one where all was sombre and gloomy, even the presence of death ; sorrow settling on the faces and grief preying on the hearts of those who watched the couch of E. S., reminding us of the thinness of the veil which separates earth from heaven.

On approaching the couch of the afflicted one, and taking her wasted hand in ours, we said, “ I hope, my dear Mrs. S., that Jesus is present with you and precious to you ; that he comforts and supports you still, and that those precious promises which gave so much hope and encouragement to

your soul in health, are verified in a rich experience of their power to support you now that you are called to suffer affliction's chastening rod."

"There was a time," said the meek and patient sufferer, "when I thought it utterly impossible for one so young as I to be ever made willing to die. But I am not only made willing to die, and enabled cheerfully to submit to the high will of the dread Supreme Disposer of all things, but I can rejoice in the prospect of dissolution. While with the eye of faith I view the Saviour, I realize a degree of calmness and serenity, such as no words can ever describe or tongue express. But when I withdraw my eyes from the infinite fulness of power, love, and merit which is in my Saviour, then I feel weak ; confusion, dismay, and the fear of death take hold of me. But with the eye of faith I can see the land which is afar off, and already taste its fruits."

"I seem to lie so near
The heavenly portals bright,
That I catch the streaming rays,
That fly from eternity's own light."

After reading and briefly commenting on the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and praying that he who trod the surging waves of the little hill-girdled and foam-crested Lake of *Galilee*, quieting its turbulent waters, and hushing to silence the howling winds, might be with her

while fording the Jordan of death, we quietly withdrew. One more week of weakness and decay, and the last battle was fought. E. S. died a conqueror: A plain stone, reared by the hand of love, marks her resting-place; and never do feelings of a more solemn character fill our mind than when we stand musing on the green hillock of her grave. She sleeps in Jesus.

Death can never come amiss to the good; for the saints to die is gain. "Tell father," said one when dying, "that Samuel died sitting in his chair with his foot upon the neck of the last enemy." "I am crossing Jordan," said another in his last moments, "its waves run high, and its waters are deep, but I am on the rock, I fear no shipwreck." Dr. T. Goodwin, when about to depart hence, said to a friend who stood by him, "Ah, is this dying? How have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend."

Sarah Hunt could say in death, "Help me to shout, mother; mother, help me to shout. I want all to help me to shout, glory! I want them to see how I can die."

"This is worth living for," said her mother.

"Yes," replied Sarah, "and it's worth dying for. I used to think it would be hard work to die, but it is beautiful to die. I am not in the dark. Jesus is in the valley. Glory be to his name! I thought I should have gone out of the world without telling

hold of me. But with the land **which is a fruitful**

more? This is sufficient. I have it,
it; all is well, all is well. Be faith-
ful, preach the truth, warn the un-
believers, whether they will hear, or
they will forbear." Waving her hand as
she exclaimed, "Adieu, adieu, for ever
we shall meet in heaven."
the death of the righteous.



any one that I had religion. But I shall not now. I cannot help shouting ; I wish I could make them hear to America."

Turning to her brother, she said, "Meet me in heaven."

Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Jesus can make a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. God puts honour upon such. They honour him in life ; he honours them in death and through eternity.

"I have," said a good man, when dying, "borne so many testimonies to the power and grace of God in life, that I have sometimes thought I should not be permitted to give one in death : but, bless his name, I am, and it is this, 'Because Jesus lives, I live also.' Alleluia !"

Mrs. F. Harrison, who for a period of more than forty years occupied a place on the preachers' plan of the Malton Circuit was visited by us about a fortnight prior to her decease, which occurred in April, 1868, when she said, "Read me the first verse of the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans." We did so, when she immediately replied, "O, the power of that text to my soul, I cannot explain it, it is a world of comfort to me. Read me the 121st Psalm." Having read it, she requested us to repeat the fourth and fifth verses ; after which *she said*, "The Lord, the Lord, is thy keeper, what

can I covet more? This is sufficient. I have it, Milner, I have it ; all is well, all is well. Be faithful, my dear sir, preach the truth, warn the ungodly ; tell them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Waving her hand as we left her, she exclaimed, " Adieu, adieu, for ever on earth ; we shall meet in heaven."

Let me die the death of the righteous.



CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.



WHAT then, is the conclusion? It is verily, that to fear God, and keep His commandments, is the whole duty of man. Duty, did I say? Yes, duty; but it is more. It is his happiness, his interest, his life, his all. If we have any great interest anywhere, they are identified with our duty to God. If we have none here, we have none anywhere. To obey is better than sacrifice. The fear of the Lord tendeth to life. The way of the wise is above, that he may depart from hell beneath. The merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof far surpasses rubies, and nothing will bear a comparison with it.

Without any attempt at recapitulation, we may offer a few remarks on the scenes in the aggregate. That they embody living illustrations of God's truth we firmly believe. They also exemplify the blessedness of the religion of the Cross, *the force of the Divine Word when applied to the*

heart by the Holy Spirit, the freeness of the Saviour's grace, the fulness of His mercy. They also portray the evil and misery of sin, show the dangers of procrastination, and declare the awful possibility of sinning and trifling away the day of grace, until nothing remain but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of Christ and His Church.

We also learn the importance of visiting the sick and afflicted. It was once remarked by a junior Primitive Methodist Minister, that none but inferior preachers were in the habit of making many family visits. Without pausing to animadvert on this silly statement, we may observe that no one who believes the precepts, principles, and example of Jesus to be binding on those who profess Christianity, can deny that it is the duty of such to visit the sick. If Jesus has called us into the great field of Christian toil and ingathering, it is our duty, not merely to preach so many sermons per week, and visit so many families, but to win as many souls to Christ as we can, and by all the means we can; and what more efficacious method can we adopt than that of carrying the lamp of truth into the habitations of the lost, the sick, and the dying? On New Testament principles, pastoral visitation from house to house is as much a

minister's duty as is preaching in the Chapel. As Mr. Bright recently remarked, "We know the Divine Founder of our faith has left much more of the doings of a compassionate and loving heart than he has of dogma. What always strikes one most in reading the narratives of the Gospels is, how much compassion there was, how much of dealing kindly with all that were sick, and all that were suffering." The sick were never overlooked by the Son of God. The Church would do well to consider this. Why should there not be in all our Churches, especially in large towns, companies organized for the purpose of visiting the sick. Ten or twelve pious souls in a large town, might achieve mighty things in this department of Christian labour and duty. Suppose they were to go, four or six every Sabbath, two and two in different directions, and thus spend one hour each Sabbath afternoon, who can tell how many hearts would be comforted, souls won for Christ, and families brought to unite themselves to the Church. We have known cases of whole families being brought to identify themselves with particular churches, from the fact that such churches had visited some of the members of those families while sick. Such organizations might have a secretary, to whom the church members might give information of persons sick in their neighbourhoods, so that time would not be wasted in searching for

them. Such a work would honour God, bless men, and benefit the Church.

There is one thing more in connection with the scenes, that we have been repeatedly deeply impressed with. It is this ; that such as visit the sick should have it in their power, as necessity might require, to afford a little monetary aid. It is well known that the salaries of our ministers are such as to preclude the possibility of them doing much for the poor and needy, whom it is often their painful duty to visit. To visit the dying, and find them destitute of every earthly comfort, and, in some instances, of even the necessities of life, and to begin to say to such, " Trust in the Lord ; thy bread shall be given thee and thy water shall be sure," while we render them no assistance, wears such a look of hypocrisy, and seems so much like tantalizing such sufferers, that we have often felt shame, as it were, to burn our cheeks to a cinder, when compelled so to do. Many times has my soul been wrung with anguish and distress, on witnessing such scenes of misery which we could not relieve. We have often refrained from visiting such, rather than do so to have our feelings thus wounded. For we have proved by experience that, in witnessing suffering, unless there be corresponding efforts to relieve that suffering, the emotional part of our nature is damaged, the feelings are blunted, insen-

sibility superinduced, until we become partially past feeling, and like men inured to danger, who can sleep as soundly in a powder magazine as the most secure place. We may ultimately become hardhearted and void of compassion for suffering humanity. Christianity is the patron of all that is humane, benevolent, and kind. She weeps with them that weep, and is full of tenderness and consideration for the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Could we not, as churches, have in all our circuits a fund for the relief of those extreme cases of need? Let there be a treasurer and secretary, and let those who visit such persons, furnish the Sick Fund Committee with the names, residence, &c., of those needy ones. Supposing occasional collections were made in our places of worship for this purpose. The poor brethren of Jesus we have always with us, and ever shall have. Acts of mercy to them, Jesus says, are acts of kindness to himself; to neglect, despise, and forget them, is to evince a want of love to him. If Jesus were on earth, who amongst us but would be ready to give him the best we have, yea, all we have: the shoes from our feet, and the garments from our bodies, rather than let him starve? He is in our midst in the persons of his needy brethren; let us *honour him* by feeding the hungry, clothing the *naked*, and visiting the sick and afflicted.

One or two more observations, and we say FINIS. The scenes teach the possibility of the believer losing his hold of Christ and His salvation, and again becoming involved in the darkness, gloom, and misery of spiritual death and condemnation, to his present utter discomfort and hurt, and final overthrow of body and soul in hell. Mis-carriages after conversion are common things. They are much to be deprecated, and, generally, such a state is reached by gradual stages. Few Christians fall suddenly, as few men, comparatively, die suddenly. The superstructure is assailed by a sapping and mining process, the foundation is besieged until the building comes down with a crash. Indifference sets in, worldliness creeps on, carnal ease gets a place in the heart, Jesus is jostled out, He must take the "manger."

The more spiritual means are neglected, or are attended to in a perfunctory manner, so that instead of being means of grace they are wells without water. Let such as have lost their first love seek to recover their forfeited blessings, ere they be lost and damned to all eternity. Jesus waits to save penitent backsliders. He has saved many such, and will yet save many more. Again, the variations and fluctuations of christian experience is strikingly manifest. The frames and feelings of the pious, as well as those of other men, are rarely

long at one stay. Satanic temptation, mental depression, nervous exhaustion, physical weaknesses and afflictions, are what all Christians are more or less subject to. From these causes spring a variety of effects, such as the loss of sensible comfort and pleasing hopes, and fond desires, and joyous anticipations. Satan is the good man's sworn foe, and he has access to the mind without consulting the will; he strives to hinder, puzzle, and perplex him, sometimes by entangling his mind with problems of a speculative character, or difficult passages of Scripture, as he entangled the mind of Sarah with a natural impossibility. Genesis xviii. 9—13.

In these conflicts we must "keep to the plains," as Mr. T., of Easingwold, was wont to express it to ourselves, when in conversation on this subject. By keeping to the plains, he meant, that we should keep to plain truths.

On visiting a Mrs. C—, this, the 22nd day of March, 1869, she related the following as her experience in relation to the fluctuations of feeling with regard to spiritual things :—"I sometimes retire to rest full of peace and hope, enjoying a tranquility of soul that seems so great that nothing could disturb, and, when I awake in the morning, I feel as if I had no religion at all. There seems an utter absence of hope and joy in the Lord; I have to *make an effort to hold fast the beginning of my*

confidence ; but I have learned from my Bible and minister, that such changes of feeling may be neither the result of sin nor unfaithfulness, but may result from bodily weakness ; and if not from that, yet from causes over which I have no control ; consequently, such changes involve no condemnation : therefore, I continue to put my trust in the Lord."

Such seasons of gloom are sorely trying ; but there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. This truth we must hold fast if we would have an even course to heaven. Of all the Christians whom it has been our lot to lead in class, the experience of the Rev. J—F— was the most even ; he rarely seemed to evince anything approaching to a fluctuation. We attributed this calm, constant, and even frame of mind to the correct, clear, and comprehensive views that he had of Christ in his several offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. He understood his Christian privileges, and what use to make of them. The lack of this is the cause why so many members of our Churches have such an uneven course to heaven. They do not seek to grow in knowledge as well as grace. But the dark and cloudy days, which most good people experience, especially those who are ignorant of Satan's devices and the faithfulness and power of Jesus, are not without their use. They often prove a blessing.. As the ugly toad is

said to wear a precious jewel in its head, so those seasons of clouds and darkness, they are pregnant with salutary lessons. They empty our hearts of self-dependence, and teach us to live out of ourselves and on the Saviour and his fulness of grace. We are complete in him. In fine, trim your lamps and be ready. The foolish virgins were too late. Terrible, indeed, will be the damnation and eternal overthrow of such as are too late in a Gospel land like ours. A man who would enjoy the pleasures of this world, said, "It was too soon for him to think of another world." He journeyed, and was taken ill very suddenly, in the middle of the night, at an inn. The people there sent for a minister to pray with him ; but, when he came, the dying man looking him in the face, before he could speak, said to him, "Sir, it is too late." The minister said, "Christ is able to save to the uttermost," and explained the Gospel to him. He replied, "Sir, it is too late ;" the minister said, "Will you allow me to pray with you?" His only reply was, "Sir, it is too late," and he died, saying "It is too late." O, that all who read these pages may take warning and seek the Lord ere it be too late. Death and the devil are doing their work ; souls are being hurried into eternity every moment ; and if not pardoned and washed in the blood of Jesus, there is no *place* but hell for them. Unrenewed souls are un-

meet for heaven. They have neither lot nor part in the matter ; where Christ is they can never come. Reader, the dark Jordan of death lies before thee, it may not be far in the distance. Art thou prepared for the goodly land beyond ? if not, how wilt thou do ? Again I ask, how wilt thou do ? I turn now to,

" You who laugh, and scorn, and sneer, How will you do ?
When in Jordan you appear, How will you do ?
Can you then your terrors brave,
Say you have no soul to save,
When you sink beneath the wave ? How will you do ?

" You who have no more than form, How will you do ?
Can you brave the awful storm ? How will you do ?
When the waves of death assail,
Every reed and prop will fail,
Forms will be of no avail. How will you do ?

" You who have been turned aside, How will you do ?
Whither will you flee to hide ? How will you do ?
Conscience will in terror rise.
And the worm that never dies,
When you sink no more to rise. How will you do ? "

We think you do ill now without the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It will be ten thousand times worse with you in death, but how will you weather out an everlasting night in hell ?

" 'Tis not for man to trifle, life is brief,
And sin is here !
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear ;
We have no right to sport away the hours ;
All should be earnest in a world like ours.

“Not many lives, but only one have we,
One, only one,
How sacred should that one life ever be,
So quickly gone ;
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.”



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